Mr. President, I came here to talk about the

future of Iraq. I am just going to make a few comments because we are

in Iraq. We better be successful there. The stability of that country,

politically and economically, is extremely important to the interests

of the United States. If it is destabilized, or if we cut and run, a

vacuum is going to be created. That vacuum is going to be filled. It is

going to be filled by terrorists, somewhat akin to what happened after

the Soviets got whipped in 1989 in Afghanistan. They left and we left

also. We were in there clandestinely. Of course, that

created a vacuum and that vacuum was eventually filled by the Taliban.

And then, of course, the Taliban provided protection for al-Qaida, the

beginning of that network. We see the result, the painful, painful

result, not only with the beginning of the 1993 attempted destruction

of the World Trade Center but the completion of that plan to destroy it

in 2001 and then the many other bombings that have occurred around the

world.

So we better be successful. We have young men and women--we have old

men and women over there, too--doing a fantastic job for us. Not just

service men and women wearing the uniform of this country; these are

men and women who are not wearing the uniform of this country but are

in equally as important positions such as the CIA, the State

Department, AID, all of the American companies that are over there in

the reconstruction effort--the nongovernment groups that are over there

trying to help out the Iraqi people.

As we approach this 1-year anniversary of the fall of Saddam Hussein,

it is appropriate to consider what lies ahead for the Iraqi people and

what lies ahead for the American people who made some progress now in

the reconstruction of Iraq. There is now an Iraqi transitional

administrative law which outlines the basic principles upon which a

free and Democratic Iraq will be governed. But trying to get democracy

across to a community, to a society that has lived under repression for

so long--

I ask unanimous consent I have an additional 7

minutes.

The responsiveness we have had thus far, I

must say, is nothing short of remarkable. But there are still many

concerns that I have about the reconstruction of that country.

The first is that we have an administrative law that hands control

over to the Iraqis, but it hasn't been spelled out. It seems as though

the decisions and the actions in Iraq are being driven by an artificial

deadline--June 30.

Why June 30? Are we ready to hand over to these institutions that

have no experience in democracy in another 3 months? I don't think so.

An expeditious transfer of power to Iraqis certainly may be desirable,

but we shouldn't put the cart before the horse and give sovereignty to

a governing body that may be less than fully able to handle the

political, military, economic, religious, and ethnic strife that may

arise from such a premature handover. That would put American lives

further at risk and would jeopardize the entirety of our reconstruction

efforts today.

I am also concerned about the nature of the United States presence in

Iraq after the turnover. Will a government, a new Iraqi government

within this short period of time 3 months from now, have sufficient

legitimacy among the Shiite, Sunni, and Kurds--all of them--to maintain

the presence of our troops who are so desperately needed to maintain

the security and stability of that country?

The disagreements over the presence of the troops, not even to think

of the disagreements over the number of our troops and other political

issues involving a successor government which could give rise to civil,

religious and/or ethnic strife--guess who would be right in the middle.

It would be our U.S. troops.

The transitional administrative law does not include an agreement for

the stationing of U.S. forces. That gives rise to the prospect of U.S.

forces fighting well-armed militia groups in addition to the security

threats they face every day. What are they facing every day? Improvised

devices that are designed to lure our troops to them and then kill or

maim our U.S. service men and women.

In addition, the Coalition Provisional Authority now has been working

hard to stand up an indigenous Iraq security and defense force.

I went to one of those police training academies outside of Amman,

Jordan. It was impressive. But within an 8- or 16-week course, they

were only going to be able to train about 1,500 policemen.

I am concerned about whether this force is going to be adequately

staffed, resourced, and ready for the tremendous task of law and order

in Iraq after the turnover on June 30.

Moreover, if these indigenous security efforts fall short and

significant disagreements lead to an unraveling of a unified and

sovereign Iraq, guess who is going to be on the ground as Iraq

dissolves into many religious and ethnic community conflicts. You got

it. The United States service men and women are going to be in the

middle of it.

The political dissolution of Iraq is something the United States must

take every precaution to avoid. That is another reason not to let the

artificial deadlines drive the Iraqi reconstruction.

I am concerned also about the role of religion in the future of Iraq.

The transitional administrative law stipulates Islam will be considered

a source of legislation. I don't have any problem with Islam. That is

their faith. But it seems this provision has satisfied neither those

who wish for a secular government nor those who wish for an Islamic

state.

The United States must more clearly and urgently demand freedom for

all religions and protect against the persecution of any particular

religion. We cannot allow religious extremism to permeate Iraqi society

in spirit and practice, deed, or law.

I am concerned about the economy of Iraq.

Think about it. We appropriated $18 billion for the reconstruction

effort that is starting to enter Iraqi society. For the next 6 to 8

months, $18 billion will be infused to building roads and bridges and

restoring wetlands, water systems, and electrical systems. This is

going to be a country flush with U.S. dollars.

My worry is the Iraqi economy is going to become heavily dependent on

U.S. dollars. This puts an enormous burden on the U.S. taxpayer. What

happens after this appropriation dries up?

I urge the administration not only to call on the international

community, as we did during the Afghan war and following the fall of

the Taliban in Afghanistan, but that we call on other countries and

make them follow through on their pledges for financial assistance.

Finally, I am concerned about the distinctly American nature of

reconstruction efforts. The President promised Congress he would work

closely to build international support for our efforts to disarm Saddam

Hussein. While we are grateful for the few nations providing personnel,

Operation Iraqi Freedom is predominantly an American program. Some may

argue that it may not matter whether other nations participate or how

other nations view our efforts in Iraq and the global war on terrorism.

But this Senator, and I think a lot of Senators, would beg to differ.

This is an important part. This is a very important part of keeping

more allies involved. It would so much improve our chances of obtaining

critical assistance from other Arab countries, especially the Arab

countries in that region, as well as other nations of the world that

now are reluctant to participate.

I wanted to get these thoughts off my chest about this looming

deadline of June 30. I wanted to, as we say in some corners, look over

the horizon at what may be coming and how America needs to prepare for

what may be coming in that strife-torn country of Iraq.

I yield the floor.